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FRENCH HOUSE FURNISHING.

BY THEODORE CHILD.

THE BATH-ROOM AND THE DRESSING-ROOM.

THERE is a prevalent opinion amongst Anglo-Saxons that the French are not a bathing people. This statement requires very considerable qualification. In the year of grace 1644, the author of the *Lois de la Galanterie Française* wrote as follows: "To speak first of that which concerns the person, you may go sometimes to the bathers to have the body cleaned, and every day you will take

houses than Paris. In almost every street you will find an *établissement des bains* composed of a multitude of little cabinets, each containing a bath. In Paris it is the custom for people to go to the bath house or to have a bath brought up to their flat from the bath house, each bath house keeping portable baths for the purpose and cisterns on wheels, drawn by hand or horse-power, to convey the hot water, which is carried up stairs in buckets in very primitive style. Such being the custom of the country, we must not look for bath rooms in the ordinary French tenement houses; we shall only find them in the private hotels of the wealthy and in large country houses.

Generally, it must be confessed, that modern French bath rooms, like the bath rooms we find in the ordinary English house, contrast very unfavorably with those of bygone ages, and not only with the excessive luxury of the Roman baths, but even with the baths of a hundred years ago. The modern bath room is generally a narrow cabinet without decoration, within one corner a narrow, unornamented bath, the water of which smells only of the leaden pipes through which it has passed. When you get out of the bath there is no couch, no *lit de repos*, no perfume-burner to render the atmosphere grateful to the sensitive nostrils, no *massage*, no shampooing, no frictions, no essences, no refinements whatever. Getting out of the bath simply means a brusque transition from hot to cold.* It is true that we moderns have not, as the ancients had, time to pass half our days in a bath. With us, unfortunately, time is money. This, however, is all the more reason

for rendering as agreeable as possible the short time that we have to pass in a bath room. Here, as in every other nook and corner of our home, let us endeavor to have artistic surroundings on which the eye and the mind may always dwell with pleasure. Such would be the bath room which Edward de Goncourt imagined for his heroine La Faustin, and which was described in this journal last March. Such was the bath room of Trémicour, described in Bastide's *Petite Maison*. Marble, porcelain, muslin—nothing had been spared in Trémicour's bath room. The wainscoting was covered with arabesques, bronzes of cafferi, pagodas, crystal and shells, mingled tastefully with



WATER URN FOR TOILET, STYLE LOUIS XVI.

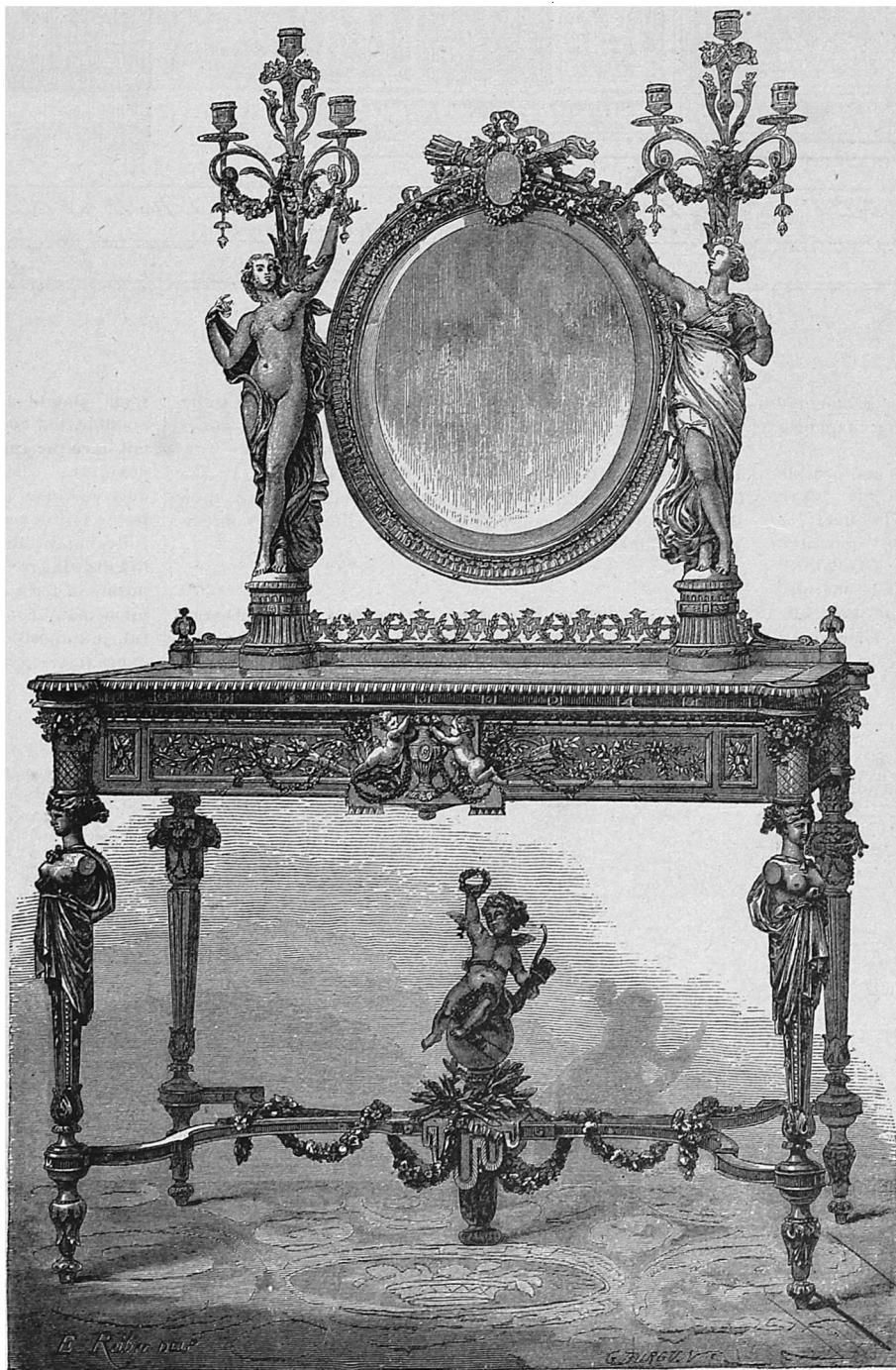
the trouble to wash your hands with almond bread; you must also wash your face *almost* as often." Such were the recommendations it was thought useful to make to the fair ladies of the Renaissance. So, too, Henri IV., of amorous memory, never even rinsed his mouth out from the day of his birth to the day of his death. Louis XIV., when he rose in the morning, contented himself with cleaning his nails and rubbing his eyes with alcohol. Marguerite of Valois rarely washed her hands more than once a week. In the XVIII. century, on the contrary, baths—warm baths—were much in vogue and were taken, if not with the minute care of the ancient Romans, at least with a refinement and a touch of parade very natural in that age of luxury. Still, owing not a little to the use of powder and the impossibility of unpowdering and repowdering their hair every day, we are obliged to reconcile ourselves to the thought that the ladies who figure in the delicious pictures of Lancret, Baudoin and Lawrence did not smell sweet. In reality, baths in the XVIII. century were considered as a luxury and a pleasure rather than as a means of cleanliness. It is only in the present century, together with horse-racing, betting, lawn tennis, athleticism and other phenomena of Anglomania that baths, douches, tubbing and purificatory ablutions have come to be regarded not only as necessary to health, but as the duty of every gentleman. Still even now the maxim that cleanliness is next to godliness, is only put into practice by the upper ten thousand and by the inhabitants of the large towns; the peasants, even when they live on the banks of a river, never think of bathing, and the southern French consider that the natural sudation to which they are predisposed takes entirely the place of baths, either warm or cold. But in point of fact, at the present moment, there is perhaps no city in Europe better provided with bath



TOILET ACCESSORIES, STYLE LOUIS XVI.

marine plants, formed the decoration of the room, in which were two recesses, one occupied by a bath and the other by a bed of Indian muslin, embroidered and trimmed with tassels and fringe. By the side of the bath room was a dressing room, the wainscoting of which was painted by Huet with panels of fruit, flowers and birds, intermingled with garlands and medallions, in which Boucher had painted in *camaiieu* little gallant subjects and other similar subjects over the doors. A silver toilet service by Germain was not forgotten, nor vases of blue and gold porcelain filled with fresh flowers. The chairs were gilded wood, upholstered in blue lampas, and the tables and other furniture of "verniss Martin." The ceiling was vaulted gold mosaic, intermingled with painted flowers.

A beautiful and elegant bath-room is in a chateau near Fontainebleau, and constructed from the designs of Francois Blondel, to whom we owe some of the happiest and purest specimens of the Louis XV. style in interior decoration. The style of decoration is simple and severe, and fitted to be carried out in stone or marble. In the case we are describing the room is wainscoted and painted white and gold; the front of the baths is painted white, and the bronze ornaments in relief are gilded; the curtains are of white linen trimmed with gold fringe and a little embroidery; over the door is a painting in *camaiieu* in the style of Boucher, which, in case the room were executed in stone or marble, might be advantageously replaced by a bas-relief; on each side of the door is a bracket supporting a vase of precious marble mounted in bronze; the ceiling is adorned with arabesques in gold and a central and corner subject in *camaiieu*; the floor is of blue and white marble in a simple diamond pattern. The console table, the centre tables and the minor articles of furniture are very simple Louis XV. pieces, and the chairs and sofas are upholstered in faded blue lampas. This bath room is really a delicious room, of supremely elegant proportions, and, with its view over an old park and with a mass of lilacs, azaleas or other flowering shrubs in one corner, it is perhaps as charming a nook as one could imagine for the purpose. Yet another bath-room worth mentioning was that of



TOILET TABLE, STYLE LOUIS XVI.

la Dervieux, in her time a rival of the celebrated Sophie Arnoue. La Dervieux in her riper years married the architect Belanger, and had a very beautiful house in the Rue Chantierine, now Rue de la Victoire. The bath-room was octagonal in form and preceded by a large antechamber provided with couches, chairs, etc., all in the style of the Directory—that is to say, semi-Pompeian. In an old and rare colored plate representing the "Salle des bains dans l'hôtel de la Citoyenne Dervieux," the octagon bath-room is represented with its white marble floor, in the centre of which is a circular fountain basin, and immediately over the fountain a glass cupola. One bay of the octagon is occupied by a casement window, one by the doorway, two by recesses, in which are placed divans, and the other four by panels painted with subjects in the Pompeian style. The ground of the decoration is blue for the panels and white for the recesses, and the subjects are polychrome. The divans are draped in white linen embroidered with rose. The bath is of antique bronze with Pompeian ornaments, and is placed opposite the window which looks into a garden.

In a house in the Place Vendôme, erected about 1790, I have seen a very handsome bath-room, the decoration of which is in the style of late Louis XVI., verging towards that taste for Pompeian antiquity which characterizes the style known as First Empire. The original bath and its accessories were, I am told, reproductions of Roman models, so, too, were the tripods, chairs, couches and other furniture of the room, but all that has now been dispersed, and the decoration of the walls alone remains. This decoration consists of large panels, each one framed in a border of bronze acanthus and lily leaves with an interior border finely chiselled of gilt brass. At the top of the panel is an oblong compartment representing a scene of dolphins and tritons executed in white porcelain on a sky blue ground, Sevres imitation of Wedgwood ware; in the centre is a shield shaped medallion; below that a smaller oblong compartment, and below that another circular medallion, each decorated with white porcelain mythological figures of dolphins, mer-

maids, nymphs, etc., on a blue ground. The body of the panel is filled in with very ornate arabesques executed in white stucco on a background of sienna yellow, also of stucco. The body of the panel is therefore of stucco, in which are set the porcelain medallions, and around which are placed the gilt and bronze frames. The marriage of these four materials and of the four colors, white, blue, bronze and yellow, is very happy. The design of the panels is very ornate and complicated, but executed with very little relief. I mention the decoration for what it is worth; it is certainly handsome, and perhaps my description may, in default of a drawing, give some decorative artist an idea. All the above remarks apply equally to the

cabinet de toilette or dressing-room. It is no longer the custom as it was in the last century for ladies to arrange their toilet in public, in the presence of a promiscuous crowd of wits and gossips of both sexes. Our modern ladies have adopted the advice of Ovid, Balzac and Madame de Genlis, who all agree on this point, that a woman should never

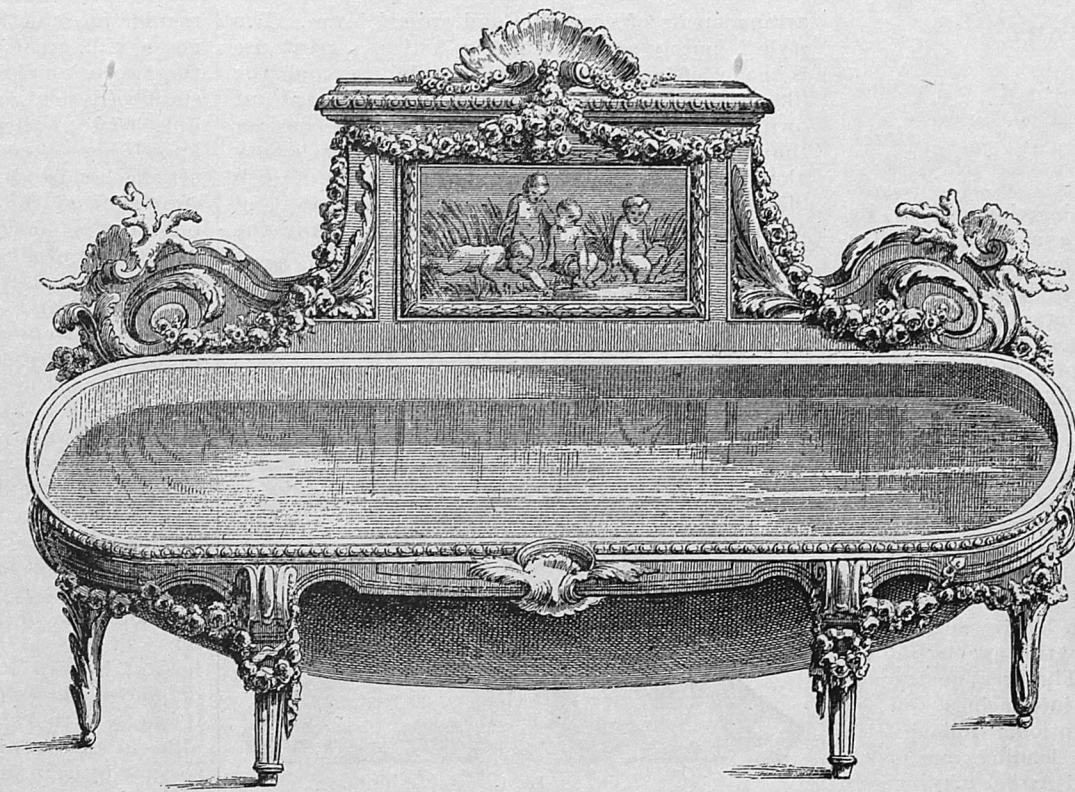
on swivels, as they are now made so that you can get at once a front, back and three-quarter view of yourself. The floor will be thickly and softly carpeted and the hangings and upholstery must be in gray or neutral tones so as not to interfere with the real color and brilliancy of the toilet. A lady, for instance, who had her dressing-room hung

with blue night, by the contrast and reflection of the surrounding colors, find her complexion and dress satisfactory and in harmony while in her dressing-room, and be disagreeably surprised to find, when she arrived in her friend's rose saloon, that her harmony was a failure and that her dress was too accentuated. Their soberness of tone need not, however, imply poverty in the decoration and style of the dressing-room. In the furniture and in

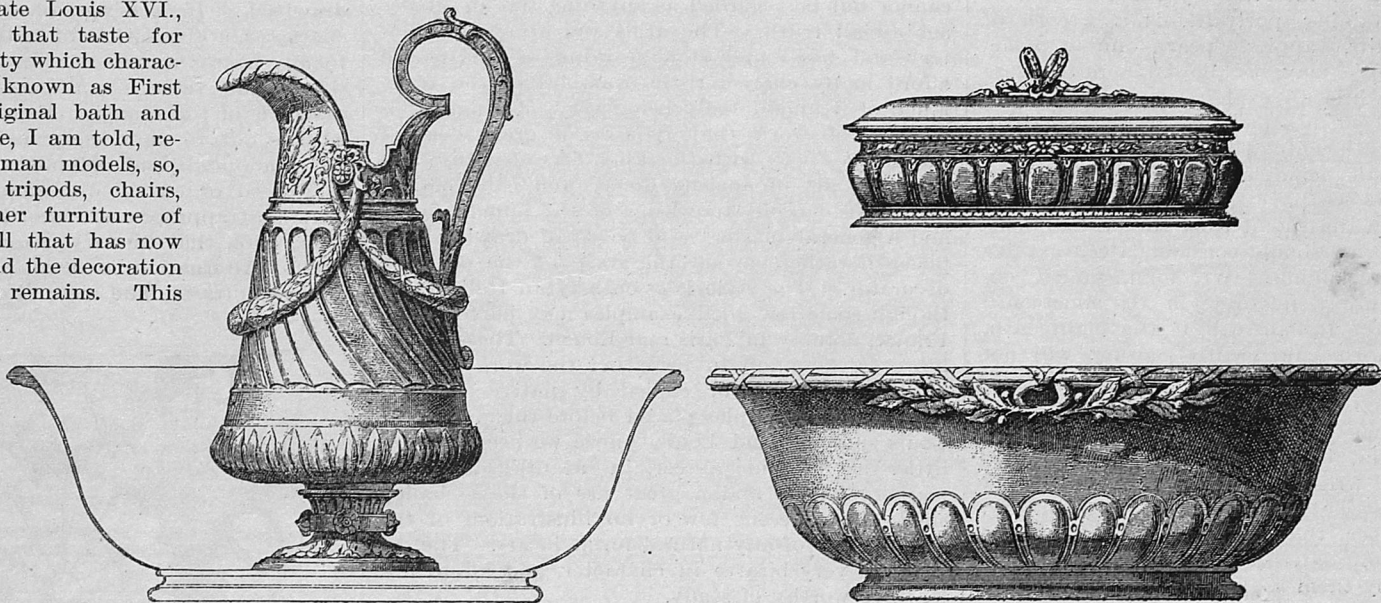
the toilet accessories, silver, porcelain, brushes, jewel cases, chimney ornaments, powder-boxes, etc., luxury, art and taste need have no limits. The splendor and beauty of modern toilet accessories defy verbal description; we can only refer the reader to the cuts that he will find from time to time in these pages. Furthermore the dressing-room may be as large as you please and it may even be combined with a bath-room and a douche-room and be furnished with sofas and couches. In this case there is room for a great display of art in the bath which may be, if you please, of solid silver, as the legend said M. Gambetta's was, or it may be of precious marble, or of faience, or better still a master-piece of bronze such as some of the great decorative artists

of the last century, like Delafosse, designed and engarlanded with roses. After all the dressing-room may be made as simple or as sumptuous as you please, for as no one is admitted into it, no one can be shocked by the deficiency or excess of luxury; the size and the quantity and form of the furniture in it are subject entirely to the caprice of the occupant.

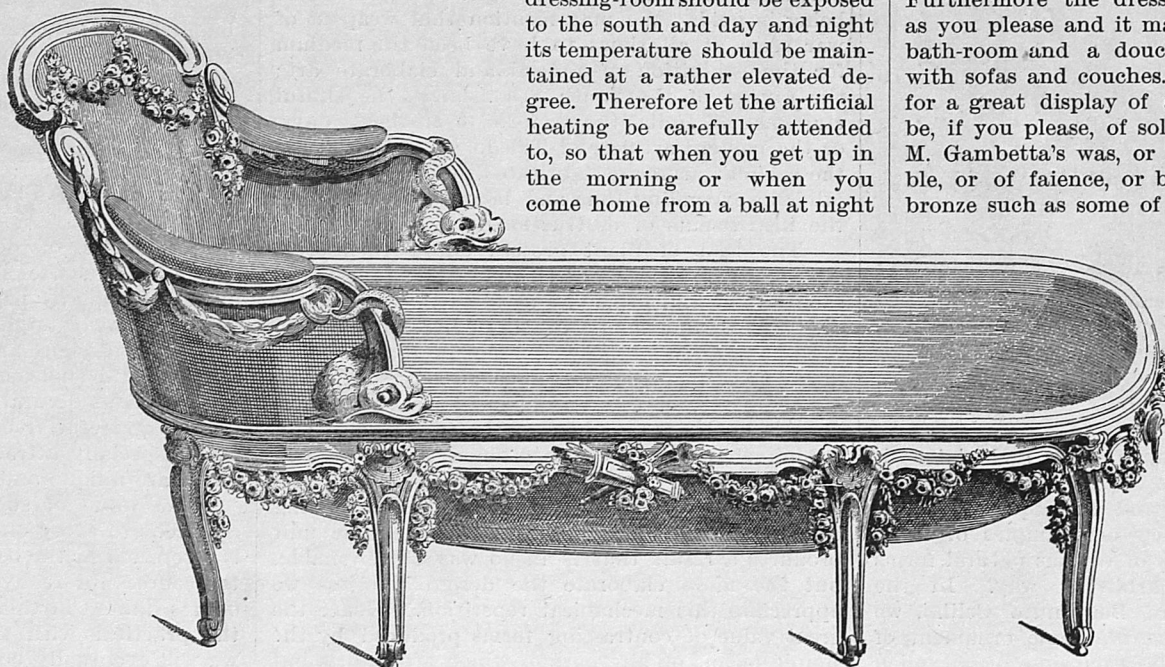
Linen draperies are sometimes trimmed with bands of Turkey red and lace insertions.



BRONZE BATH TUB, STYLE LOUIS XV.



WATER PITCHER, BASIN AND TOILET BOX, IN SILVER.



BATH TUB, BY DELAFOSSE